

Ocean Exploration Advisory Board Justification for Charter Renewal

Congress directed the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to establish an Ocean Exploration Advisory Board under 33 U.S.C. 3405. The original Ocean Exploration Advisory Board (OEAB) Charter and Balance Plan were signed and filed August 6, 2012. Both were renewed July 23, 2014, and will expire on July 23, 2016 unless renewed.

Accomplishments under extant Charter: The OEAB held its first meeting in December 2014, followed by a second in March 2015. These meetings were primarily focused on receiving information from NOAA and from key ocean exploration partners and stakeholders. The OEAB discharged its responsibility to conduct an annual review of the NOAA ocean exploration grants process at its second meeting. A third meeting, in October 2015, resulted in a letter to the NOAA Administrator with recommendations for funding levels, areas of operation, and other matters related to the NOAA ocean exploration program. At its most recent meeting in January 2016, the OEAB engaged NOAA leadership and the NOAA ocean exploration program and provided consultation and advice of relevance to the operation of NOAA's program and NOAA's role as coordinator of the national ocean exploration program.

Need for renewal: The renewal of the OEAB Charter for ten years is integral to the conducting of agency business and is vital to public interest concerns. The OEAB is the only Federal Advisory Committee with responsibility to advise the Under Secretary on strategies for Ocean Exploration. There is no other Federal Agency, committee, or element of the Department with existing capabilities that are to be provided by the OEAB.

An explanation of why the committee's functions cannot be performed by the Department or by an existing advisory committee or Federal agency: The OEAB is mandated by law. The advice provided by the OEAB to the Under Secretary is crucial to NOAA's mission to explore and assess unknown regions to accomplish its forecasting and stewardship responsibilities. No other group of individuals, either within or outside of NOAA, has the breadth of expertise and objectivity to provide this kind of advice.

Balanced membership: The approved appointees comprise a board that meets the balance requirements as stated in the OEAB Membership Balance Plan on file with the Department of Commerce Committee Management Office. The proposed renewal Membership Balance Plan is a duplicate of the current Membership Balance Plan except for minor administrative revisions and the preparation date.

An estimated target date for the committee's completion of its functions: Because the OEAB is mandated by law and because its advice is highly relevant to NOAA mission responsibilities, there is no estimated target date for the committee's completion of its functions.